

An open letter from the Rockford Economic Development Corporation (EDC)

October 26, 2012

This letter is to inform Rockford residents of an area of concern and to encourage active support of the business community and city government.

The Rockford Economic Development Corporation (EDC) was formed in 1981, under Public Act 338, with the stated goal to assist and retain industrial and commercial businesses in our community and to strengthen and revitalize the economy of the City of Rockford and the State in Michigan. While many people consider Rockford a bedroom community, the fact is, over 40% of our tax base is provided by business and industry. The members of the EDC are chosen for their roles in the business community. We are all residents who share a sincere concern for the safety of Rockford families.

The EDC has been watching very carefully the proposed redevelopment of the Wolverine World Wide tannery site and, most recently, the redevelopment of the old Burch Body Works facility in downtown Rockford. We have also been watching with disappointment, the repeated attacks of our business community by a small group of residents who have organized themselves under the name of the Central Rockford Neighborhood Association (CRNA) or Concerned Citizens for a Responsible Redevelopment (CCRR). We must first state that the economic health of our community cannot and will not be promoted at the expense of the environment. Our State and Federal Environmental Regulations are established to facilitate redevelopment of brown field properties while respecting the delicate balance between development and protecting our natural resources. We have every confidence that our entire business community, specifically Wolverine World Wide (WWW) and the owners of the former Burch Body Works property, will act in a responsible manner and cooperatively work towards redevelopment of potential brown field sites in harmony with the community. We greatly appreciate the constant monitoring on behalf of the community that the City of Rockford, the Michigan DEQ and the EPA have provided.

Recently, this small group of residents mentioned above has lodged repeated complaints against our business community, the City and the very property owners that helped make Rockford such a desirable community. This group has submitted pages and pages of information to State and Federal regulatory agencies, including many claims which appear to be without any factual basis, in an effort to halt progressive and responsible



The members of the Rockford Economic Development Corporation signed a letter in protest of attacks on businesses in Rockford by a small group of citizens. Pictured are Dr. Michael Shibler, Linda Southwick, Dave Rasmussen, Neil Blakeslee, EDC Chairman, Rodd Blakeslee, Floyd Havemeier, and Jerry Coon. Not pictured are Michael Young and Robert Winegar. All signed the letter.

redevelopment of these properties. In our review, the vast majority of the community does not support these minority voices and it is now critical to make the community aware of the positive energy that is resonating as we work closely with WWW and the owners of the former Burch Body Works property on economic development opportunities. While these individuals may be well meaning, their position does not by any means reflect the community opinion in Rockford.

There is certainly more work to be done as continued evaluation of these properties is conducted. Scientific results to date look positive and we expect additional information to be available in early 2013. We encourage all Rockford residents and business owners to let their voices be heard and not overshadowed by the negativity that has been expressed to the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality and United States Environmental Protection Agency by a small handful of aggressive residents. You can make your voice heard by contacting the Michigan DEQ and by writing letters to the editor. If you need contact information you may get it at the Rockford City office.

Respectfully Submitted:

The Rockford Economic Development Corporation